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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Serbia*

1. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights considered the second periodic report of Serbia on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/SRB/2) at its 27th and 28th meetings (see E/C.12/2014/SR.27 and 28), held on 15 May 2014, and adopted, at its 40th meeting, held on 23 May 2014, the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the second periodic report of Serbia and the written replies (E/C.12/SRB/Q/2/Add.1) which it received, albeit late, to its list of issues. The Committee notes with appreciation that the State party's delegation consisted of experts from several ministries, which enabled an informative and constructive dialogue and engagement with the Committee.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the State party's ratification of, or accession to, the following instruments:

(a) International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, on 18 May 2011;

(b) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto, on 31 July 2009;

(c) Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, on 26 September 2006;

(d) European Social Charter (revised), 1996 (No. 163), on 14 September 2009;

(e) International Labour Organization Convention No. 183 (2000) concerning the revision of the Maternity Protection Convention, on 31 August 2010, and Convention

* Adopted by the Committee at its fifty-second session (28 April–23 May 2014).

No. 150 (1978) concerning Labour Administration: Role, Functions and Organisation, and the Maritime Labour Convention (2006), on 15 March 2013;

(f) 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, on 7 December 2011.

4. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to promote economic, social and cultural rights, which included the adoption of:

(a) The Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, on 31 August 2009, followed by the appointment of the Commissioner for Protection of Equality, on 5 May 2010, and the adoption of the Anti-Discrimination Strategy 2013–2018, in June 2013;

(b) The Law on Gender Equality, which is aimed at creating, among other things, equal employment opportunities for women, in 2009; and the amendments to the Law on the Election of Members of the Parliament, which set a 33 per cent quota for the underrepresented sex on electoral lists, in 2011;

(c) The Law on Amending the Law on Non-Contentious Procedures and the Law on Permanent and Temporary Residence, which enabled birth registration and issuance of personal documentation to stateless persons, in particular Roma, in 2012 and 2009, respectively; the Law on Asylum, in 2007; and the Law on Migration Management, in 2012;

(d) The amendments to the Law on the Foundations of the Education System, which enhanced inclusive and non-discriminatory education, in 2011; the Law on Social Welfare, which broadened the concept of persons incapable of work and increased related social welfare benefits, in 2011; and the Law on Patients' Rights, which introduced advisors on patients' rights in local self-governments, in 2013;

(e) The adoption of the National Employment Strategy 2011–2020, which provided for subsidies for the employment of Roma, in 2011; and the amendments to the Labour Law, which extended the protection of working mothers and pregnant women, in 2013.

5. The Committee also welcomes the strategies and national action plans against corruption, trafficking in persons, and domestic violence, as well as the operation of the Office of the Protector of Citizens (Ombudsman).

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

Direct applicability of the Covenant

6. While noting that the Covenant forms an integral part of the legal system and is directly applicable, the Committee regrets that the State party was not able to provide information about the cases of direct applicability of the Covenant before the courts in the State party and the available remedies for individuals claiming a violation of their economic, social and cultural rights.

The Committee calls on the State party to collect and include in its next periodic report information on the justiciability of the rights enshrined in the Covenant, including the cases of direct application of the Covenant before domestic courts, and on the available remedies for individuals claiming a violation of the economic, social and cultural rights contained in the Covenant. In that respect, the Committee draws attention to its general comment No. 9 (1998) on the domestic application of the Covenant. The Committee also recommends that the State party improve its human rights training programmes so as to promote better knowledge, awareness and application of the Covenant, in particular among the judiciary, law enforcement officials and other actors, as well as among the rights holders.

Collection and processing of data

7. The Committee is concerned about the lack of systematic collection and processing of disaggregated data which would allow for an accurate assessment of the fulfilment of economic, social and cultural rights in the State party.

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Set up a system to collect statistical data on the major factors affecting the implementation of the economic, social and cultural rights set forth in the Covenant, duly disaggregated by year, sex, age, urban/rural population, ethnic origin, disadvantaged and marginalized groups and other relevant criteria, and include such statistical data in its next periodic report;

(b) Undertake regular and systematic assessments, against a clear set of indicators, of the level of enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights by various segments of the population, taking into account the conceptual and methodological framework for human rights indicators that was developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights;

(c) Apply human rights indicators, in particular for economic, social and cultural rights, as part of its national development and integration strategies.

Protector of citizens

8. The Committee notes with concern the lack of a legal mandate for the Protector of Citizens (Ombudsman) to interact with the international human rights system and civil society organizations, the lack of sufficient financial and human resources available to the Ombudsman's Office, and the limited follow-up by the State party to the views and recommendations of the Ombudsman.

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Amend the Law on the Ombudsman in order to provide for the interaction of the Ombudsman with the international human rights system and civil society organizations;

(b) Provide the Ombudsman's Office with sufficient financial and human resources for the effective implementation of its mandate, in compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles);

(c) Take into account the views and opinions expressed by the Ombudsman when adopting legislation or formulating policies and programmes, particularly in the area of economic, social and cultural rights.

Judiciary

9. While noting the recent judicial reforms, the Committee is concerned that the administration of justice is still ineffective, in particular in the context of employment-related claims against companies that were privatized, as evidenced by the excessive length of judicial proceedings, lack of remedy and non-enforcement of judgements under the domestic law.

The Committee recommends that the State party take the necessary legal, policy and other measures to ensure the effective and independent functioning of the judiciary as a means of safeguarding the enjoyment of human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights.

Maximum available resources

10. The Committee regrets the absence of sufficient information on the use of maximum available resources by the State party in achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the Covenant (art. 2, para. 1).

The Committee recommends that the State party regularly evaluate the impact of the measures taken, including against corruption, and the budget allocations made for the implementation of the Covenant in order to assess whether the maximum available resources have been used in achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the Covenant, taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 3 (1990) on the nature of States parties' obligations and its statement of 2007 on the obligation to take steps to the maximum of available resources.

Discrimination

11. The Committee is concerned that members of national and ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons, including Roma, and other marginalized groups continue to face discrimination with regard to access to economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee is also concerned that the anti-discrimination legislation is not systematically applied, as evidenced by the low numbers of concluded cases related to discrimination (art. 2, para. 2).

The Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Intensify its efforts to promote equality and combat discrimination against members of ethnic minorities, persons with disabilities, refugees and internally displaced persons, including Roma, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and other marginalized persons and groups with regard to access to employment, social security, housing, health and education;

(b) Systematically apply the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and other relevant legislation, as well as the Strategy for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination 2013–2018, in order to prevent and punish all acts of discrimination, taking due account of all prohibited grounds of discrimination as contained in article 2, paragraph 2, of the Covenant and elaborated in the Committee's general comment No. 20 (2009) on non-discrimination in economic, social and cultural rights.

Roma

12. The Committee is concerned about the prevailing discrimination against Roma as evidenced, inter alia, by disproportionately high unemployment, limited access to social security, accommodation in informal settlements, and inadequate health care and education. The Committee therefore regrets the shortcomings in the implementation of the Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma 2012–2014, as conceded by the State party, and the insufficient implementation of the nationally agreed priorities regarding Roma at the local level (art. 2).

The Committee urges the State party to take further measures in order to overcome the prevailing discrimination against Roma in the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, including the revision of the Strategy for Improvement of the Status of Roma, by better reflecting the specific situation of Roma and ensuring that the nationally agreed priorities on Roma are duly communicated to the local authorities to be effectively implemented.

Personal documentation

13. While noting the recent amendments to facilitate birth and residence registration, the Committee is concerned that a number of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons remain without personal identity documents, which limits their enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. The Committee is also concerned that many internally displaced Roma living in informal settlements without a registered residence did not have their permanent address re-registered from their last place of permanent residence (arts. 2, 9, 11, 12, 13 and 14).

The Committee recommends that the State party ensure effective access by refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, in particular Roma without a registered residence who live in informal settlements, to procedures for birth and residence registration in order to facilitate access to personal documents, including birth certificates, identity cards and work booklets. In the meantime, those affected should have access to economic, social and cultural rights.

Asylum seekers, refugees and internally displaced persons

14. While noting the functioning of the Asylum Office, the Committee is concerned at the lack of a fair and efficient asylum procedure, as only a very few asylum seekers in Serbia have been recognized as refugees even though the majority of them come from refugee producing countries. Noting further the functioning of the Serbian Commissioner for Refugees and Migration, the Committee is concerned that refugees and internally displaced persons do not have access to comprehensive integration programmes. The Committee is also concerned at the limited capacities of social welfare services in places where asylum centres are located and the insufficient reception capacities for asylum seekers (arts. 2, 9 and 11).

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Enact necessary by-laws and adopt other measures, including training for migration officers, as well as safeguards for the independence of the Asylum Office, to ensure the full implementation of the Law on Asylum of 2007 and to guarantee a fair and efficient asylum procedure, in particular protection against refoulement;

(b) Establish a functional local integration mechanism for refugees recognized under the Law on Asylum, as well as for internally displaced persons, in areas such as education, social assistance, language and vocational trainings and housing, and adopt and implement in that regard a national strategy for resolving problems of refugees and internally displaced persons beyond 2014, together with an action plan which should include clear time frames, as well as an adequate budget;

(c) Increase the capacities of social welfare services in places where asylum centres are located, in order to better respond to the needs of asylum seekers and recognized refugees;

(d) Improve the existing reception capacities for asylum seekers in order to be able to respond to fluctuations in the number of asylum applications and the actual length of the asylum procedure.

National machinery for gender equality

15. The Committee is concerned about the limited effectiveness and the lack of sufficient human and financial resources of the Gender Equality Directorate and the Gender Equality Council, which has an impact on the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality and the National Strategy for the Improvement of the Status of Women and the

Advancement of Gender Equality and its Action Plan. The Committee is also concerned that the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan is not adequately monitored (art. 3).

The Committee recommends that:

(a) The State party assess whether the gender equality mechanisms are adequate, and provide the national machinery in the field of gender equality with the necessary human and financial resources to improve its effective and regular functioning;

(b) The National Strategy for the Improvement of the Status of Women and the Advancement of Gender Equality and its Action Plan be adequately monitored against a clear set of indicators.

Gender discrimination

16. The Committee is concerned about the low employment rate of women, the prevalence of gender discrimination in employment and, in particular, the disproportionately high unemployment rate of young, low-educated and older women. The Committee is also concerned about the underrepresentation of women in the national and local government bodies and public sector positions (arts. 3 and 6).

The Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Undertake comprehensive reform to repeal legal provisions which may perpetuate gender discrimination, and empower women through gender-sensitive labour policies aimed at hiring women to non-traditional professions, enhancing their access to vocational and technical education and ensuring equal conditions of work;

(b) Analyse the determining factors of women's entry and retention in the labour market, including in the informal economy, and take measures to eliminate the social perceptions of traditional gender roles and prejudices, including those concerning employment, while raising awareness of both men and women about harmonizing work and family duties;

(c) Enforce the Law on Gender Equality, and in particular the State party's 33 per cent quota for representation of the underrepresented gender in specific positions in public administration and in decision-making processes.

Unemployment

17. While noting the National Employment Strategy and its Action Plan, the Committee remains concerned about the high unemployment rate in the State party, which disproportionately affects women, persons with disabilities, Roma, internally displaced persons and people living in rural areas. The Committee is also concerned about the small proportion of employed persons with disabilities, indicating that the Law on Professional Rehabilitation and Employment of Persons with Disabilities has had little impact (art. 6).

The Committee urges the State party to intensify its efforts to reduce the unemployment rate through effective measures of active employment policy, including requalification, local employment initiatives, placement incentives and tax benefits for employers, in order to promote the employment of persons from marginalized groups, in particular in rural areas. The Committee also urges the State party to establish objectives on an annual basis for the employment of persons with disabilities and to collect reliable data on the extent of their unemployment.

Equal pay for work of equal value

18. While noting the guarantees of the principle of "equal pay for work of equal value" in the laws of the State party, the Committee is concerned that women do not receive equal remuneration for the same work or for work of equal value (art. 7).

The Committee urges the State party to ensure the effective implementation of the provisions of the Labour Code and the Law on Gender Equality with regard to equal pay for the same work as well as for work of equal value, including through labour inspections and the imposition of sanctions, and address the sources of the limited effectiveness of the remuneration legislation, in particular through public campaigns and training within the State party's associations of employers and employees.

Labour Inspectorate

19. The Committee notes with concern the limited effectiveness of the Labour Inspectorate, in particular in preventing occupational accidents and diseases (art. 7).

The Committee recommends that the State party empower the Labour Inspectorate, through both preventive and punitive instruments, in particular to help employers prevent occupational accidents and disease, and that it collect relevant data and undertake systematic training of labour inspectors in this regard.

Minimum wage

20. The Committee notes with concern the way the minimum wage is established without taking into account the cost of living or the views of the social partners, and without regular review. The Committee is also concerned about the low levels of income among employed persons with disabilities (art. 7).

The Committee calls on the State party to take measures to ensure that the minimum wage is established with due account of the cost of living and of views of the social partners, and to periodically review its level to provide all workers and their families with an adequate standard of living, in accordance with article 7 (a) (ii) of the Covenant. The Committee also calls on the State party to combat low income among employed persons with disabilities through special measures.

Trade union rights

21. The Committee is concerned at the low level of enjoyment by employees in the private sector of their right to form or join trade unions and at the excessive restrictions on the right to strike for public sector employees even if they do not provide "essential services" (art. 8).

The Committee urges the State party to ensure to the employees in both the private and public sectors the effective enjoyment of the right to freely form and join trade unions, as well as the right to strike. While noting the draft law on strikes of 2013, the Committee recommends that the State party limit the prohibition against striking for public sector employees by narrowing the definition of "essential services" so that it complies with the Covenant and relevant International Labour Organization standards.

Unemployment benefits

22. The Committee reiterates its concern at the low level of the unemployment benefit, which is not sufficient to ensure an adequate standard of living for the persons concerned and their families, and notes with concern the low percentage of unemployed persons receiving the unemployment benefit (art. 9).

The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the State party increase the amount of the unemployment benefit in order to ensure an adequate standard of living for unemployed workers and their families, and requests it to provide information on the extent of the unemployment benefit coverage, disaggregated by, inter alia, residency status and national or ethnic origin.

Pensions for refugees and internally displaced persons

23. The Committee is concerned that large numbers of refugees from Croatia and internally displaced persons from Kosovo continue to be deprived of their right to pensions which have been overdue and unpaid for years (art. 9).

The Committee strongly urges the State party to pursue bilateral negotiations regarding the payment of pensions to refugees from Croatia residing in Serbia and to arrange for documentation substitution for the payment of pensions to internally displaced persons from Kosovo who could not present their work booklets.

Social security

24. The Committee regrets the lack of information on whether the social assistance benefits are periodically adjusted to enable all disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and families to enjoy an adequate standard of living (arts. 9 and 11).

The Committee calls upon the State party to:

(a) Increase the social assistance benefits, taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 19 (2007) on the right to social security, in order to assist all concerned individuals and families throughout the State party, including persons with disabilities, older persons, children, low-income families and those in a situation of long-term unemployment, to enjoy an adequate standard of living;

(b) Consider the introduction of a minimum-income benefit that would bring together all the existing social assistance benefits in order to ensure an adequate standard of living for all, in particular disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and families;

(c) Prevent any unjustified interruptions in the allocation of social security benefits, such as benefits to those who are unable to work, which are recognized only for a period of up to nine months per calendar year.

Trafficking in persons

25. While noting the measures taken against trafficking in persons, the Committee is deeply concerned about the increase in trafficking in persons, both internal and cross-border, in particular women and children, and the low numbers of persons prosecuted and convicted for the crime of trafficking in persons. The Committee is also concerned at the lack of medical, legal and social assistance, including shelter, for the victims of trafficking (art. 10).

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Take further measures to ensure the early identification of victims and the adequate training of law enforcement officers and the judiciary, with a view to effective investigation and prosecution of the perpetrators of trafficking as well as of those who exploit the victims of such acts;

(b) Strengthen the collection of data on the victims, perpetrators, investigations and sanctions, including on sanctions for law enforcement officials implicated in trafficking;

(c) Provide adequate medical, legal and social assistance, including shelter, to the victims of trafficking, and ensure their access to judicial remedies.

Domestic violence

26. While welcoming the criminalization of domestic violence, the Committee notes with concern the reported lack of effectiveness of the National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women in the Family and in Intimate Partner Relationships (2011–2015), as more than half of the women experienced some form of violence. The Committee is also concerned about the high incidence of abuse and neglect of children (art. 10).

The Committee urges the State party to effectively investigate, prosecute and punish all acts of domestic and gender-based violence, including abuse and neglect of children; to support victims of such acts, including by providing for adequate crisis centres that offer safe lodging and necessary assistance; to provide training to law enforcement officials and judges; and to undertake information campaigns in order to increase public awareness about the pervasive nature of domestic and gender-based violence, including abuse and neglect of children.

Children without parental care

27. The Committee is concerned about the increase in the separation of children from the family. It is also concerned about the insufficient information on the efforts to provide alternative family care for children without parental care, and the fact that community-based alternatives to institutional care are insufficiently developed (art. 10).

The Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Prevent the separation of children from the family, in the best interest of the child, and take steps to ensure that the childcare system provides effective support to families in crisis and at risk of child separation from the family;

(b) Take further measures to provide adequate alternative family care for children without parental care, with a focus on children with disabilities;

(c) Accord priority to community-based alternative social services, rather than residential institutional care, for children without parental care, and develop proactive measures for leaving institutional care.

Child labour

28. The Committee notes with concern that many children, in particular Roma children, below the minimum age for employment of 15 years work in the streets and in the informal economy, and are exposed to exploitation and trafficking in persons (art. 10).

The Committee urges the State party to strengthen the monitoring of child labour, in particular by enhancing the Labour Inspectorate, in order to detect and prevent the worst forms of child labour, in particular by street children. The State party should also improve protection and reintegration programmes that focus on family empowerment and elimination of various forms of abuse and economic exploitation of children, including positive parenting programmes for marginalized communities, and compile information thereon, including statistics.

Poverty

29. The Committee remains concerned about the limited effectiveness of the current strategies to address extreme poverty in the State party, in particular among refugees,

returnees, internally displaced persons, members of minorities, older persons and persons with disabilities, and about the prevalence of regional disparities in the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights without discrimination (arts. 2 and 11).

The Committee urges the State party to expand its Poverty Reduction Strategy to address the extreme poverty faced in particular by members of marginalized groups, to take all necessary remedial measures to address the regional disparities that affect the equal enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and to allocate sufficient funds for the implementation of those strategies, taking into account the Committee's statement on poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 2001.

Forced evictions

30. The Committee is concerned about the recent incidents of forced eviction and resettlement of internally displaced persons and other disadvantaged groups, including Roma, Ashkhali and Egyptians, from irregular settlements in Belgrade and other parts of the country. The Committee is particularly concerned about reports that some of the concerned families with children were not consulted beforehand and were left without adequate alternative housing, compensation and protection (art. 11).

The Committee urges the State party to take urgent measures to consult affected communities throughout all stages of evictions, to ensure due process guarantees and compensation and to provide in particular for adequate alternative accommodation in locations suitable for social housing construction, taking into account the Committee's general comments No. 4 (1991) and 7 (1997) on the right to adequate housing and on forced evictions.

Social housing and conditions in informal settlements

31. The Committee expresses its concern at the small number of social housing units constructed annually for low-income families. The Committee also reiterates its concern that thousands of Roma continue to live in impoverished informal settlements without access to electricity, running water and sewage, as well as without access to medical care and education (art. 11).

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Take policy and financial measures to expand the network and quality of social housing for low-income families, which should become part of the existing national plan of action on housing;

(b) Accelerate measures for ensuring that Roma have access to adequate and affordable housing with, inter alia, legal security of tenure, safe drinking water, adequate sanitation and electricity, including by improving the conditions of existing settlements or by constructing social housing units.

Safe drinking water

32. The Committee is concerned about the lack of access to safe drinking water in some parts of the State party, especially in rural areas (art. 11).

The Committee recommends that the State party undertake additional measures to implement water supply projects to ensure equal access to safe drinking water in all parts of the country. In that regard, the Committee invites the State party to take into account its general comment No. 15 (2002) on the right to water.

Right to health

33. The Committee is concerned about the inadequate budget for the health-care system, the lack of access to health care for disadvantaged individuals who do not have a health card, and the limited access to health services, in particular in rural areas. The Committee is also concerned about the increase of HIV/AIDS, the absence of information on sexual and reproductive health and rights as part of the education curricula, and the limited network of mental health services for children (art. 12).

The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its measures to increase the budgetary allocations to the health sector, ensure that disadvantaged individuals have a health card so that they can have access to health care, and extend health services to rural areas. The State party should also continue to address the spread of HIV/AIDS by promoting adolescent health and providing health counselling and services to the general public, provide for comprehensive sexuality education, and extend the network of mental health services for children while replacing institutional care with community-based support services.

Right to education

34. The Committee notes that asylum seekers and persons granted asylum can access primary and secondary education free of charge; however, it is concerned that asylum-seeking children accommodated in the asylum centres in the State party are not being enrolled in local schools (arts. 13 and 14).

The Committee recommends that the State party enable access to primary education and facilitate access to secondary education, in line with the Law on Asylum, to all child asylum seekers pending consideration of their refugee claim.

35. The Committee is concerned about the prevalence of violence and discrimination in schools and the lack of enrolment of children with disabilities in mainstream schools. The Committee is also concerned about the placement of Roma children in special schools or classes and the high drop-out rates of Roma children from primary education, as well as low school attendance (arts. 13 and 14).

The Committee recommends that the State party continue legal and policy reforms to allow every child to achieve the right to education, and to that end:

(a) Intensify the implementation of measures to prevent violence and discrimination in schools, including through peer programmes and enhanced intra-school relations;

(b) Ensure inclusive education for all children with disabilities in mainstream schools;

(c) Guarantee the enrolment of Roma children in regular classes of primary schools instead of schools or classes for children with special needs;

(d) Reduce the high drop-out rates of Roma children from primary education, take effective measures to keep Roma attending school and increase school attendance at the secondary level through affirmative action, such as the granting of scholarships and the provision of schoolbooks.

Cultural rights

36. The Committee is concerned that the cultural rights guaranteed under the Covenant are not accessible to all persons, in particular in rural areas. While noting the measures taken for the equal enjoyment of cultural rights by all groups, in particular the establishment of national minority councils in 2010, the Committee is concerned that

Bosniacs have not benefited from the full enjoyment and protection of minority rights (arts. 2, 13, 14 and 15).

The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a comprehensive cultural strategy, with a coordination mechanism, for the promotion, protection and enjoyment of cultural rights by all individuals and groups in the entire territory of the State party, while preserving cultural diversity. The Committee encourages the State party to take further measures so that all communities with specific identities, including Bosniacs, can benefit from the enjoyment and protection of minority rights. The Committee also encourages the State party to consider increasing the budget allocated to cultural development and participation in cultural life, in line with article 15 of the Covenant.

D. Other recommendations

37. **The Committee encourages the State party to consider signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Committee also encourages the State party to consider ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.**

38. **The Committee requests the State party to disseminate the present concluding observations widely among all levels of society, particularly among government officials, members of Parliament, judicial authorities and civil society organizations, and to inform the Committee, in its next periodic report, on all steps taken to implement them. It also encourages the State party to engage non-governmental organizations and other members of civil society in the process of discussion at the national level prior to the submission of its next periodic report.**

39. **The Committee requests the State party to submit its third periodic report, prepared in accordance with the revised reporting guidelines adopted by the Committee in 2008 (E/C.12/2008/2), by 30 May 2019.**